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ABSTRACT

Researchers have been interested in studying the correlates and reciprocity of peer acceptance across various cultures. Tenth grade students in a Saudi Arabian suburban high school completed social desirability scales to examine the relationship between the acceptance of class members by individual students and the acceptance of individual students by class members. Results showed that on the whole, relationships between individual students and the rest of the class were not universally reciprocal. This finding might have occurred because of lack of opportunities for student interaction in and outside school. Reciprocity of peer desirability which developed as a result of social interaction was not of the same type among students who expressed identical feelings towards one another. The results suggest that Saudi students, while skilled at initiating relationships, may have difficulty maintaining them. (JAC)

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DEGREES OF RECIPROCITY OF PEER ACCEPTANCE AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS OF JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA.

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AN OCCASSIONAL RESEARCH PAPER

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Degrees of Reciprocity of Peer Acceptance Among High School Students of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

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Members of every social unit need harmony, cooperation, and understanding to be productive and to enjoy mental peace. However, as the social unit or group with which one interacts becomes larger and as the environment in which this interaction takes place gets removed from the real life, group harmony, cooperation and understanding becomes harder to realize. School students participate in groups (class-rooms) which are generally larger and are placed in the school environment which is far removed from the real life. Thus the challenges faced by school students for maintaining harmony, cooperation and understanding are relatively great. How the students face these challenges affect them emotionally and academically. Peer acceptance affects group harmony. School authorities, therefore, need to understand factors which affect and the means to enhance peer acceptance among students.

Factors associated with peer acceptance have been reported in several research studies. In a study about third grade students, Singleton (1974) found that sex had considerable consistent influence

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on the sociometric choices for work and play. Race was also a significant factor but it was neither as strong nor as consistent as the sex influence. Similarity of belief system has been found as a determinant of attraction among peers (Geen and stoner 1971; Cole and Davenport 1972). Holcomb 1972; found relationship between school environment reading level, sex and socio-economic level; and peer acceptance. Benson and Kuipers (1974) found that in head start children intellectual development was positively related with peer adjustment. In a study about the effects of racial integration Carter and others (1974) concluded that grade point average, not race, surfaced as a significant predictor variable for white social or academic acceptance. For black students race was the most important predictor variable for male social acceptance and a significant predictor for female social acceptance and academic acceptance. In their review of literature Carter and others (1974) cited research studies showing positive relationship of self-concept, academic achievement, self-acceptance and social class with peer acceptance.

Researchers have been interested in studying the correlates and reciprocity of peer acceptance. Some degree of reciprocity of peer acceptance can be expected in almost every stable group. However, in Saudi Arabia, because of close family ties, wide neighbourhood affiliations, inherited tribal loyalties and deep hospitality extended to strangers and friends alike, individuals develop social skills rarely found in cultures around the world. In view of this cultural aspect it was expected that the reciprocity of peer relationship among Saudi high school students might be wide and deep. This study was conducted to examine this assumption. The specific purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between the acceptance of class members by individual students and the acceptance of individual students by his class members.

Procedures:

Tenth grade students enrolled in a suburban school of Jeddah were requested to rate each of their classmates on a four point

scale of social desirability. The categories on the social desirability scale and the values assigned to each categories for scoring purposes were as follows:

I like him to be one of my friends.	- 4
I like him to be in my study group but not as a friend.	- 3
I don't mind spending sometime with him once in a while but not always.	- 2
I prefer not to have any kind lf relationship with him.	- 1

A score for "the acceptance of others" was derived by adding scale values each student indicated for rest of the class members. Likewise by adding the scale values indicated by class members regarding a particular student a score of "acceptance by others" for that student was derived.

There were six sections of the tenth grade. For every section two sets of scores i.e. "acceptance of others" and "acceptance by others" were prepared. The correlation indicating reciprocity of peer acceptance between these sets was calculated by applying Pearson product moment formula.

For detailed examination of reciprocity of peer acceptance data were also compiled by pairing the scale values every two students indicated towards one another. The possible pairing of scale values were as follows:

4-4, 3-3, 2-2, 1-1, 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 2-4, 1-3, 4-1.

For every section frequencies of paired choices made by students towards one another were noted separately.

Results:

Correlation coefficients calculated between "acceptance of others" and "acceptance by others" scores are given in Table-I below:

TABLE - I

Relationship between "Acceptance of others" and "Acceptance by others" scores:

Section	N	Correlation Coefficient r	Significance Level
A	24	0.06	Non Significant
B	22	0.253	Non Significant
C	27	0.056	Non Significant
D	29	0.057	Non Significant
E	30	0.147	Non Significant
F	20	0.190	Non Significant

The Correlation coefficients in all cases were non-significant.

The frequencies of choices made towards one another by students of all six sections are given in Table-II.

TABLE - II

Frequencies of paired choices made by students

Section	Frequencies of paired choices									
	4-4	3-3	2-2	1-1	1-2	2-3	3-4	1-3	2-4	1-4
A	34	13	11	23	32	31	20	36	34	32
B	26	3	10	26	13	31	21	32	29	27
C	41	12	15	19	35	50	49	31	51	39
D	70	29	25	8	29	56	71	27	45	25
E	52	16	26	29	55	48	48	31	89	46
F	21	10	12	10	13	24	23	17	32	15

Data presented in Table-II indicate that choices made by students varied from being reciprocal to conflicting. Furthermore reciprocal choices varied in their nature as well. In order to examine the distribution of responses for various types of reciprocal and conflicting choices the data given in Table-II were further classified as follows:

a) "highly desired reciprocal" indicated by the categories 4-4, 3-3, 3-4.

b) "moderately desired reciprocal" indicated by the category 2-3.

c) "least desired reciprocal" indicated by categories 1-1, 1-2, 2-2; and

d) "conflicting" indicated by categories 1-4, 2-4, 1-3.

The frequencies and percentages of choices made under these four levels are given below in Table - III.

TABLE - III

Reciprocal and Non-Reciprocal choices.

Section	Total No. of paired choices	Highly desired Reciprocal		Moderately desired Reciprocal		Least desired Reciprocal		Conflicting	
		No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
A	266	67	25.18	31	11.65	66	24.81	102	38.34
B	218	50	22.93	31	14.22	49	22.47	88	40.36
C	342	102	29.82	50	14.61	69	20.17	121	35.38
D	385	170	44.15	56	14.54	62	16.10	97	25.19
E	440	116	26.36	48	10.90	110	25	166	37.72
F	177	54	30.50	24	13.55	35	19.77	64	36.15

Review of the data in Table-III shows that with the exception of Sections D and F, the percentages of "highly desired reciprocal" choices and "least desired reciprocal" choices for the remaining four sections were quite close. Further, conflicting choices made by students of five of the six sections were about one third and the remaining two third were reciprocal.

Discussion:

The correlation coefficients presented in Table-I for all six sections were non-significant. This shows that one the whole, relationships between individual students and the rest of the classmembers were not universally reciprocal. However, if we look at Table-III, we find that a great number (about two third) of choices made by students were reciprocal. This evidence shows that reciprocity of peer acceptance among the subjects was selective and did not exceed beyond certain limits. Although Saudies are assumed to be much more social, the lack of universal reciprocity among the subjects of study could be due to lack of opportunities for students interaction in and outside school. Teaching in Saudi Schools is fairly traditional. Teachers use traditional lecturing rather than discussion groups. Consequently social interaction inside the class room is minimized to its lowest ebb. Had there been more group activity, cooperative projects and deliberate efforts by the school to enlarge the sphere of student interaction, reciprocity of peer acceptance among the subject might have been more. Reciprocity of peer desirability which develops as a result of social interaction was not of the same type among students who expressed identical feelings towards one another. As indicated earlier the percentage of "highly desired reciprocal" and "least desired reciprocal" choices for most sections were quite close. This shows that Saudi students while skilled in initiating social relations may not be able to maintain positive inter-relationship with all of their peers. Factors like intolerance, higher expectations of others, touchiness etc. among students may be responsible for spoiling their interrelationships.

In addition to evidence to selective reciprocity of peer acceptance among the subject, there was some evidence contrary to this as well. If we consider the peer choice categories of 4-1 as highly conflicting and 1-3, 2-4 as slightly conflicting we find that considerable number of choices (about one third) made by students were conflicting. These conflicting choices appear to have played a role in bringing the correlation coefficients given in Table-I at non-significant levels. The conflicting choices made by students towards one another (specially "4-1" combination) indicate that either students do not get enough opportunities to convey their good feelings to others or certain students, irrespective of how they feel about others, possess certain characteristics which make them socially desired.

The findings of this study, strictly speaking, cannot be generalized beyond the subjects of the study. However, to extent that the subjects of the study resemble other students in Saudi Arabia the findings may be generalized. On the basis of the study findings it is recommended that schools in Saudi Arabia should emphasize those activities which enhance reciprocity of peer acceptance. Reasons for "least desired reciprocal" and "conflicting" peer feelings should be discovered and students should be guided to maintain positive relationships they develop with others.

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